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gfiles
INSIDE THE GOVERNMENT

'We have grossly neglected natural water bodies'

BIG BOSS

secretary, drinking water supply | shantha sheela nair

interviewed by ANIL TYAGI

Appropriately, Shantha Sheela Nair – Secretary, Drinking Water Supply, Ministry of Rural Development – feels strongly about India's water problems. A 1973-batch IAS officer of the Tamil Nadu cadre, she started her career as a Sub-Collector in Dindigul in 1975. As Chairperson and Managing Director of the Madras Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board in 1994, she resolved the chronic water problem of Chennai. The city used to spend a crore of rupees on buying water every day. Nair, who believes that rain water harvesting can tackle the problem of drinking water shortage in India, made it mandatory in the city. She also converted Chennai into an independent water civic authority. She was also Secretary to the Government, Municipal Administration and Water Supply Department, Secretariat, Chennai.

gfiles: *Why should the matter of drinking water be such a priority for the government?*

Shantha Sheela Nair: Drinking water is the prime necessity of life. When we look at the pre-Independence days, the source of water was community-based surface water with little and no treatment available. After Independence, the government took responsibility and established the Public Health Engineering Department. Until the 1970s, ground water was exploited for drinking and agriculture. The scenario changed when the country faced droughts and resultant drinking water shortage during the 1980s. Ground water became contaminated with fluoride and arsenic. Hydrological factor of the ground changed and the availability of drinking water in the country became a serious issue. To meet the challenge, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi launched his National Drinking Water Mission (RGNDWM). The government divided the problem into two: drinking water problem in rural areas and in municipal areas.

The National Drinking Water Mission was essentially a technol-

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ogy mission. Reliance on ground water resulted in wide-scale installation of India Mark 2 pumps. It was an era of hand pumps.

gfiles: *You are talking about both availability and quality of water. How are you going to ensure them?*

SSN: We are dependent on ground water in the rural areas which is contaminated with fluoride and arsenic in various states. The ground water is also depleting rapidly. Extensive research convinced us that availability and quality of water can be maintained if we increase the water table by recharging it through rain water harvesting. We are encouraging treatment of water for arsenic, fluoride, nitrate, iron and salinity. We are emphasizing community participation in design of schemes, community ownership, pricing and tariff mechanism. We are solving the problem of over-dependence on a single source, ground water, by creating alternative people are at risk.

We have a focused strategy for full coverage of all rural habitations by 2009 estimated as follows: 55,060 uncovered habitations, address and revive 3.31 lakh slipped back habitations, address the problem of water quality, ie, arsenic problem in 2,16,968 habitations.

gfiles: *What water treatment facilities are available?*

SSN: There are many technologies pertaining to water treatment for arsenic. The most commonly used methods include oxidation, co-precipitation and adsorption onto coagulated flocs, lime treatment, adsorption onto sorptive media, ion exchange resin and membrane technologies. All these technologies have their own merits and demerits. Surface water is the best long-term solution. To address the problem of fluoride, traditional methods such as use of herbal extracts, crushed Thetan kottai, drumsticks seeds, amla

'If we improve rural sanitation, 50-60 per cent of the water contamination problem will be solved. Under the Nirmal Gram Puraskar Yojna, villages which are free of defecation in the open are awarded'

sources like surface water and rain water harvesting.

gfiles: *Though 40 litres per capita per day (lpcd) is insufficient, how are you going to ensure even this meagre volume in rural India?*

SSN: This is a static figure, not dynamic. As far as drinking water is concerned, we need only eight litres in a day. I must re-emphasize that it is not only a question of the availability of water but the quality of water also.

gfiles: *How are you going to solve the problem of contaminated water?*

SSN: You know, 20,190 habitations in 17 states are affected by fluoride contamination. About 66 million people are at risk. Fluoride is threatening to enter the food chain. The arsenic problem is in Bihar, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Tripura, Assam and Chhattisgarh, and 16 million seeds and nirmal seeds are in use. RGNDWM has so far approved 138 R&D projects on water and sanitation of which 114 projects have been completed. Besides, we have a score of other technologies too.

gfiles: *What are your strategies to address water quality problems?*

SSN: The Government of India is working very hard to improve the quality of water. At a national workshop on R&D in Water and Sanitation organized in December 2007, it was revealed that about 1,00,000 habitations suffer from excess iron. This problem is tackled through dilution, roof-water harvesting, aeration and Terafil Filtration System. We have drawn out a concrete action plan for the states to address all affected habitations before March 2009.

gfiles: *Defecation in the open owing to*

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gfiles
INSIDE THE GOVERNMENT

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LETTERS: *gfiles* provides extremely useful insights into the working of the government. I have been reading with much interest about the problems of government and the exposes of misgovernance and corruption as well as methods of improving the functioning of the administration. I used to be in government but retired 27 years ago. I was particularly interested in the March 2008 issue which carried an interview of Shyam Saran, a former col-

Continued on page 4

THE April issue of *gfiles* completes a year of its existence. Not without significance, this birthday coincides with the 60th anniversary of India's civil services. During the past year, the magazine has looked back six decades in order to gauge perspectives as well as peered into the future to ponder the intricate weaves of how civics and politics impact the goals and parameters of good governance. We have spoken out, through our own articles and our columnists, sometimes softly, often harshly. Our judgments have been tempered, even altered, by changing information. But a central theme remains unchallenged: The crisis in governance has worsened, and continues to worsen, since Independence.

Our civil servants, for the most part, remain committed, even compassionate. But they have been overwhelmed by a pernicious system of organized patronage, often trampled underfoot by the unchecked executive powers of India's legislators. Today's Big Story about the civil services — including Defence — is about the recommendations of the Sixth Pay Commission and its proposed generous hikes in perks and salaries. All the newspapers and magazines have gone to town on it with front-page headlines about cost to exchequer and related fiscal mumbo-jumbo. *gfiles*, however, believes that the real story is not numbers but rather vision and the compelling need to make radical alterations in the system that will make government work for people rather than for politicians and vested interests.

Within the Pay Commission's recommendations are various suggestions for performance-related hikes and bonuses. The idea is to build into the civil service system a rewards-and-punishment parameter that operates in the private sector. But is this feasible or even doable? The stark reality is that time and again honest civil servants are penalized through transfers and witch-hunting inquiries if they go by the rules or ignore the diktats of the political establishment. Under the new dispensation will these people be rewarded and, if so, by whom? Will, say, a Divisional Commissioner recommend a bonus for a District Collector, or a DIG Range for a Senior Superintendent of Police for bringing to book an MLA who is building a private resort on forest land? In the real world, the official who looks the other way is the one recommended for promotion.

So the question — when considering "performance" as a yardstick of good governance — is for WHOM is the civil servant performing? Is this not a systemic case of inverted Darwinism in which the least fit (administratively) survives (politically)?

In this issue of *gfiles*, former Cabinet Secretary Prabhat Kumar addresses himself to this from the heart and with eloquence. He argues that the structure of "guardianship" envisaged by Nehru and Patel in which the civil services worked unselfishly for the common good and alleviation of misery "has been brought down like a pack of cards". Former ambassador Niranjan Desai writes that the supersession of Veena Sikri, the country's seniormost IFS officer, is a sobering message to the bureaucracy: "Don't mess with us otherwise you will have to pay the penalty." And the reminiscences of veteran IAS officer Bikram Sarkar, former chairman of the Calcutta Port Trust, contain this sad commentary: "Success (in the services) is to be achieved at any cost. Integrity, morality, conscience have no place."

These are sobering messages that all civil servants would do well to heed on the 60th anniversary of their service and light a lamp of new hope that will illumine the path for true civil service reform involving systemic changes in the entire structure of this great nation's parliamentary democracy.

INDERJIT BADHWAR
Editor-in-Chief

LETTERS

Continued from page 3

league for whom I have great admiration.
Jagat S Mehta, former Foreign Secretary, New Delhi

I have been a keen reader of gfiles right from its inception. It's a creative and informative magazine and has been received with interest by bureaucrats all over the country. However, I find the list of birthdays of IAS and IPS officers irrelevant, to say the least. Moreover, it generates a sense of discrimination among officers of other services. I suggest it be discontinued.
Dalip Singh, IAS, Haryana cadre, Chandigarh

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Dated. March 30,2008
Sd/
Anil Tyagi
Publisher

BIG BOSS

Continued from page 2

absence of a proper sanitation system in rural areas is the major cause of contamination of water. What are your efforts to solve it?

SSN: Yes. If we improve the sanitation system in rural areas, 50-60 per cent of the water contamination problem will be solved. We have introduced the Nirmal Gram Puraskar Yojna. Under it, villages which are 100 per cent free of defecation in the open are awarded. We started with 38 villages. In 2008, we have 35,000 applications for recognition.

gfiles: *The problems you have been talking about are modern-day problems of rural India. Does this mean our village communities and district administrations do not take proper care of natural water bodies like ponds and wells?*

SSN: In a way, yes. We have grossly neglected the natural water bodies. Water is available but it has been contaminated by defecation in the open and mishandling of the water bodies by the rural communities.

gfiles: *It is said the urban water crisis is more acute than the rural water crisis.*

SSN: Let us analyse this whole scenario in a different perspective. In a metropolitan city area, 90 per cent of the water supply system is based on surface water and 10 per cent on ground water. In small towns, 50-60 per cent is based on surface water. In rural areas, 80 per cent is based on ground water. So you can see we have altogether different problems in rural areas and in urban areas.

gfiles: *We have as many as 604 districts in the country. So how are you managing the rural water problem?*

SSN: The government's role is supportive. The government is planning to move from overdependence on a single source of drinking water to multiple sources in order to reduce risk and slippage. Also, for rural drinking water security, 80 per cent dependence on ground water means that approximately 12 lakh habitations are straightaway at risk. We are in the process of reviving traditional water bodies and creating rural drinking water storage reservoirs. I want to end dependence on ground water and revive existing water bodies, and create a new surface system.

gfiles: *Is there any positive response to the government's efforts from any community or from any part of the country?*

SSN: Yes. The problem needs to be looked at from three angles: government, village community and panchayat. By harvesting rain water, Khari village of Kutch, with an annual rainfall of just 350 mm and faced with two or three droughts every five years, has become self-sufficient in water. The village no longer needs water from the Narmada grid. The panchayat sells the water to the villagers.

gfiles: *Why should water be sold in rural areas?*

SSN: Of course it shouldn't. But price mechanisms have been developed by the panchayat for two reasons. One, the water should not be misused. Second, the water should be continuously supplied to the population. And people are ready to pay if they are getting uncontaminated water. Kerala has a drinking water problem. They have rainfall amounting to 3,000 mm but they do not store. Their problem can be solved through proper planning and proper storage.

gfiles: *It is felt that the issue of water surveillance has been distanced from the main agenda and therefore quality issues are lagging. What steps have you taken to tackle this?*

SSN: A national water surveillance system was evolved in 2005 with a focus on water quality and surveillance. We have formed a five-member team in every village trained in quality testing. A district water testing laboratory was provided to test the water and 17,00,000 persons have been trained across the country. Now we plan to provide field test kits to be tested in high school laboratories.

gfiles: *Water and sanitation are state subjects. Implementation of schemes is often not up to the mark due to inefficiency of state agencies. What steps have you taken regarding this?*

SSN: I don't want to comment on this aspect. I only want to emphasize that monitoring water is not rocket science. It is simple. It is a continuous process of capacity building posing great challenge. We cannot afford to keep this issue in abeyance. It is high time we plan and create a budget for providing water to the nation. We have to empower rural people, employ communities and create awareness in the country. We have till now 16,00,000 village habitations as far as water is concerned. We are in the process of putting on the Web water data relating to every parliamentary constituency.

gfiles: *Monitoring of schemes is basically compilation of reports received from state governments. Then how do you truly monitor performance?*

SSN: We have a strong monitoring system in different states and such problems are never encountered.

gfiles: *Don't you think the country needs a "Right To Drinking Water Act" on the pattern of the Right To Information Act?*

SSN: Right without responsibility does not make sense. One can demand right, but without responsibility it will become redundant. Somebody's right has to be curtailed, so that others' right can be protected. Simply creating right to water is not going to solve the problem.

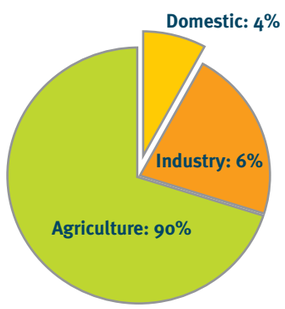
gfiles: *Water is being dealt with by many ministries. Shouldn't it be brought under one umbrella for proper coordination and a holistic view?*

SSN: When it was under one roof, people wanted many agencies to look after this subject. Now that it is no more a single-agency subject, the demand to scatter it over different agencies is surfacing. I think the present system is working very well. g

FOTOS4INDIA

'By harvesting rain water, Khari village of Kutch, with annual rainfall of just 350 mm and facing two or three droughts every five years, has become self-sufficient in water'

Current water usage



USAGE OF WATER IN RURAL AREAS (lpcd)

Drinking	3
Cooking	5
Bathing	15
Washing utensils etc	7
Ablution	10
Total	40

The height of *seva*
pleasing lalu takes all

IF you want to please Lalu Prasad Yadav, you've got to be meticulous. Sukhbir Singh, General Manager of North Eastern Railway, belatedly woke up to this mantra to get himself into the Railway Minister's good books and lay claim to the post of Member, Electrical, Railway Board.

Prior to presenting the Railway Budget, Lalu camped in his native village, Phulwaria, in Bihar for three days. It was a personal visit yet Singh, with a team of North Eastern Railway personnel, literally shadowed Lalu to cater to his every need.

Two engines, each pulling special trains of eight and 12 bogies, airconditioned and ordinary, remained idle at Hathua, the station nearest to Phulwaria, for the entire three days. A pilot engine ran two stations ahead of the special train carrying Lalu — in utter violation of the convention that only the President of India is entitled to such a facility. Singh also rushed to fulfil the demand of Lalu's son for a branded ice cream on the running train and arranged warm undergarments for the Minister at night in the village. For three days, the villagers were provided free meals at a cost of Rs 2,50,000. Sources say the bill will be footed by Indian Railways. Every night, Lalu would sit for a *bhajan* session in the open and Singh would join him, singing in chorus along with all the junior officers.

Pleased with Singh's services, Lalu has forwarded his name for the post to the Prime Minister's Office.

Vajpayee passive, family active
bjp see-saw

ATAL Bihari Vajpayee hardly needs well-wishers from outside his family to confuse the nation about whether his reported retirement from active politics is fact or fiction. The relaxed BJP veteran is nowadays a silent spectator of the game to decide who will be the next Prime Ministerial candidate from the party. But his foster son-in-law, Ranjan Bhattacharya, nephew Anoop Mishra (a Cabinet Minister in BJP-ruled Madhya Pradesh) and niece, Karuna Shukla, Rajya Sabha member from Chhattisgarh, keep feeding news bytes to the ever-eager media saying that the old man is in good health and not planning to retire from active politics at all.

Every time his main rival within the party is able to manage an impression across the country that he is now the only party candidate for the top slot as Vajpayee has taken voluntary retirement from active politics, this trio rushes in with a contradictory statement. This has been keeping party functionaries in an undecided state of mind and, of course, causing the rival sleepless nights.

Interestingly, Vajpayee neither breaks his silence nor restrains the trio from speaking on his behalf.

Nagaland VIPs and kerosene
blackmarketeering exposed

KEROSENE, the poor man's fuel, entered the black market in Nagaland during the last political regime. The situation improved overnight after President's Rule was imposed. It remained in force for two months and RS Pandey, a 1973-batch IAS officer of the state who was Secretary, Ministry of Steel, returned to Nagaland as adviser to the Governor. He worked hard to utilize the opportunity to overhaul the governance and take it to the door of the common man.

While scanning government files relating to development, Pandey came across a provision for VIP quota in kerosene that had been in force in the state for years. Shocked, he scrapped the quota and wrote to all the VIPs that if they really needed kerosene for consumption, it would be readily supplied to them on demand. The fact of the matter was that the VIPs never utilized the quota which instead went into the black market. So, expectedly, not a single VIP replied.

INSIDE EYE

ILLUSTRATIONS: ARUNA

Papas never preach in business
congressmen back corporate sons

THREE Congress stalwarts, two of them holding lucrative Ministries in the Central Cabinet and the third issuing diktats from the headquarters at 24 Akbar Road, often hold conflicting views on a number of issues within the party. Yet, when it comes to business, they stand united. Their sons have formed an engineering company and opened its office in a five-star hotel in Mumbai, understandably at the behest of their fathers.

The privileged sons proudly proclaim that the company is a secular business cartel as their patron represents different states and communities and so it does not violate the secular credentials of the Congress party. So, with the unstinted backing of these powerful and influential godfathers, the new company might very well surpass the combined strength of the Ambanis, Adanis and Mittal. g

GUILLOTINING TRANSPARENCY!

By arrogating to himself the sole right to make appointments, the PM has sent the wrong message to the bureaucracy

by Niranjan Desai

THE Prime Minister has on numerous occasions stressed good governance and accountability and that there should be more professionalism and transparency in matters affecting the bureaucracy. However, this appears to be no more than the usual rhetoric of politicians – they never put their money where their mouth is!

In a stealthy move, the UPA government on June 15, 2004 revised the procedures for Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) appointments prescribed under the Government of India Transaction of Business Rules, 1961. Under this so-called simplified and streamlined procedure, only the approval of the Prime Minister is necessary before notifying or announcing an ACC appointment, as only ex-post facto approval of the Minister in charge, including that of the MOS, is required. Further, it is claimed that such notification can be done even before the approval of the Home Minister, as ex-post facto approval alone is envisaged.

What is being described as "simplified and streamlined" procedure is, in fact, a very substantial change in the ACC procedures which have been in practice since 1961. First, it gives the Prime Minister the sole prerogative of making ACC appointments without even consulting the Minister in charge. If that is the case, then why call it a Cabinet Committee when other members of the Committee merely rubber-stamp the decisions taken by the PMO? The Cabinet system of government implies collective responsibility where the Prime Minister is first among equals; we have here in practice an "Imperial Prime Ministership"!

Second, there does not appear to be any formal Gazette notification of this very substantial change in the ACC procedures. This is again a case of lack of transparency since it is a matter of concern that the change in the relevant Government of India Rules had not been made known to those affected by it, namely the vast bureaucracy of India.

All this is a disturbing and distressing development which will affect the fate of many senior bureaucrats in future. It is very clear that in spite of public utterances about professionalism and transparency, senior appointments in the government cannot be expected to be based on such objective criteria.

Perceptions that loyalty, regionalism, casteism and cronyism would be the benchmarks for senior appointments would continue exacerbating the climate of sycophancy so prevalent in the bureaucracy. Politicians would continue to chip at the bureaucracy, to the detriment of good governance.

This would not have come to light but for the courageous persistence of one woman officer of the Indian Foreign Service. Veena Sikri, who is today the seniormost officer in the Foreign Service, has been fighting for her right to know why she was superseded for the post of Foreign Secretary. She first took her case to the Commission for Information under the RTI and later to the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) where the Commission ruled in favour of the government simply on the basis of the change in procedure for ACC appointments.

I WISH to make clear that I do not hold any brief for Sikri; my objective in highlighting the issue is that every senior bureaucrat is entitled to know why he or she is found suddenly unfit to hold a particular post when his/her overall record has generally been very good. In an age when even a child demands proper answers from parents, the government cannot stick to 19th-Century paternalism by stating that it is the government's prerogative to make any and every appointment. It must be able to say why A is better than B and so on, if it really believes in transparency and professionalism.

Sikri's case is distressing because she is being victimized for daring to use the RTI and go to CAT for standing up for her right to ask "why". What is the point of flaunting the RTI Act as one of the achievements of the UPA government when, on the other hand, you victimize a person for having the temerity to use that instrument for the very reason it was promulgated? Similarly, why have CAT when you are going to victimize a person for taking recourse to it? There is no end to such pious hypocrisy!

It is also shocking that, while talking of gender equality, the government should try to humiliate the seniormost woman officer, who is also a senior officer otherwise, in the Indian Foreign Service by giving her a Hobson's choice – either she accept a junior assignment not commensurate with her seniority or stay on leave till retirement. It is not that senior posts are not available, otherwise why give extensions to people who are retired or about to retire!

Above all, a strong negative message is being sent out to the bureaucracy: "Don't mess with us otherwise you will have to pay the penalty." All those who are concerned about good governance must baulk at this. A compliant bureaucracy which is not independent-minded is the antithesis of good governance in a democratic country.

Nothing changes and has little prospect of changing when you have petty-minded and vindictive persons pretending to be doing big things. Till then, all talk of professionalism, accountability, objectivity and transparency is mere rhetoric. g

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FOTOS4INDIA

Veena Sikri: whither professionalism?

What is being described as 'simplified and streamlined' procedure is, in fact, a very substantial change in the ACC procedures

Veena Sikri's case is distressing because she is being victimized for daring to use the RTI and go to CAT for standing up for her right to ask 'why'

The spoiled SYSTEM

The once sacrosant politician-civil servant relationship has degenerated into a farcical game of naked patronage

by Prabhat Kumar

IN taking stock of the state of the civil services, it has to be conceded that the "bamboo" frame, despite hiccups and occasional bouts of insanity, has generally performed well in maintaining the integrity of the nation. Yet, though changes have been gradual and sequentially unnoticeable, their cumulative effect over half a century has been profound.

The Indian bureaucracy is a two-dimensional system with the x-axis defining the relationship of its members to the aspirations of the people and the y-axis representing the dictates of their political masters. As in mathematics, the two dimensions are independent variables. Wherever and whenever equilibrium is struck as a straight line at an angle of 45 degrees at the origin, the result is a stable democratic paradigm. But, over the years, the line is increasingly tilting towards the y-axis.

In the early 1960s, when I entered the Administrative Service, the Collector of a district, however imbecile he may have been, was the undisputed leader of the local administration. His word was law for all the minions functioning in an area of about 1,00,000 square miles. When he gave a call for total *bebaqui* (realization) of government dues by a certain date, it was achieved regardless of politicians hissing and bellowing. In much the same way, the Cabinet Secretary in Delhi and the Chief Secretaries in the state capitals were considered "the old block".

I remember an incident when the local legislator, aided and abetted by journalists, succeeded in influencing my Commissioner to ask the state government for my "immediate removal" from the district on account of my "incapability to deal with important people of the district". The Chief Secretary, after hearing my side of the story, not only retained me in the district for another two years but ordered the transfer of the Commissioner.

In the Central Government, the institution of the Cabinet Secretary was pivotal and unassailable. He tendered advice to the Cabinet and the Prime Minister and decided the postings of all senior officers. The Prime Minister's "dhobi mark" was a mere formality.

When the politician and the civil servant started working together, it was expected that the respective roles would be defined and further refined. Intensifying democratic processes should have been accompanied by role definition, which unfortunately did not happen. Merely saying that "the politicians take decisions and the babus advise and implement" was not enough. It left room for arbitrariness and sloth.

The vaguely defined rule of democratic supremacy of the political executive in decision-making unfortunately percolated into the lower echelons of government, where the role of the civil servants was crucial to the implementation of the decisions taken upstairs.

Thus, the synergy between the political executive and the permanent civil service that existed in the 1950s and 1960s has been largely eroded over the years. It has had a very deleterious effect on the quality of governance in the states and also at the Centre. It has given way to mutual distrust and even open conflict. The politicians and the bureaucrats have together brought down the monolithic structure like a pack of cards.

In the last three decades, this uneasy coexistence has resulted in near-total confusion of the respective roles and responsibilities. Both the arms of government have contributed substantially to this confusion, and the country has suffered.

Now, democracy has seemingly taken over the civil services. The *desi* version of the spoils system of the United States has been ushered in. Today, Ministers select Secretaries, Additional Secretaries, Joint Secretaries and even lowly Deputy Secretaries in their respective Ministries. I am told that panels of candidates are sent to Ministers for their prior approval. A current Cabinet Minister is reported to have thrice rejected the panels for the post of Secretary submitted to him till he found a worthy candidate!

A number of states present a more pathetic picture. District Magistrates and Superintendents of Police are changed on the whims and fancies of MLAs, officers keep their holdalls packed to play musical chairs. Young officers are placed under suspension arbitrarily and then reinstated equally arbitrarily.

Perhaps these are the demands of a

ILLUSTRATION: ARUNA

The civil servant respected the political leader for leadership qualities....The politician respected the civil servant for impartiality, integrity and knowledge of the subject

Patel the MAGNIFICENT

IN the beginning, there existed an internal consistency between the political masters and the civil servants. That phase started with Independence and continued roughly till the end of the 1960s or the beginning of the 1970s. The internal consistency rested on a sense of mutual admiration and respect. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was perhaps echoing the sentiments of many political leaders when he eulogized the conduct and performance of the civil service in the Constituent Assembly.

The civil servant respected the political leader, whether in or out of power, for his leadership qualities and his influence on the masses cultivated and nurtured during the freedom struggle. The politician was aware of the needs of the people at the micro level, could identify with them and feel their pulse. He was pragmatic and purposeful.

The politician respected the civil servant for his impartiality, adherence to lawful authority, uprightness, integrity and knowledge of the subject. He could rely on the bureaucrat working under him for correct advice and faithful implementation.

vibrant democracy. But I feel that when the mosquito net of Article 311 of the Constitution is removed – efforts for which are afoot – the bureaucrats would be well advised to seek the shelter of the nearest politician's apron.

I think there is a strong need to re-establish the internal consistency of the government, if better governance is to become a reality.

The political executive in a parliamentary democracy is, by design, the instrument to translate the aspirations of the electorate into reality. They hold their positions because they have the verdict of the people on public policy. They are expected to be willing and able to work to see that the wishes of the people are carried out at the agency level in accordance with the law and regulations. They perform a critical function: working to translate the wishes of the people into policy initiatives.

Career civil servants perform a very different role. They *implement* policy, besides helping to *make* it. They provide continuity and specialized expertise based on institutional knowledge and experience. Traditionally, most of them spend their entire working careers in government, although in our country nowadays it seems to be changing.

The *desi* version of the spoils system of the US has been ushered in. Today, Ministers select Secretaries, Additional Secretaries, Joint Secretaries and even lowly Deputy Secretaries in their Ministries. Panels of candidates are sent to Ministers for approval

I believe that these roles are separate, and it's important to do all we can to keep them separate. My hypothesis is that a time has come for an institutional division of the competence and responsibility of decision-making between Ministers and officers. For instance, the Chief Secretary should have a 2-3 year tenure (as commanded by the Supreme Court but not followed by some of the states) and should be made responsible and accountable for administrative postings. Functional responsibilities could also be similarly divided.

Another consequence or by-product of the functioning of democracy has been a total disappearance of civil service leadership. Civil servants have always been in a privileged vantage position thanks to their education, training and status to provide leadership to the people, but they failed to assume the leadership role. They failed to give voice to the needs of the people. Ensconced in the security of their employment, they confined themselves to carrying out the dictates from above rather than attempting to ameliorate the economic and social injustices faced by the under-privileged and the exploited. The rare ones who do are disliked by their colleagues and politicians alike.

On the contrary, we find public leadership emerging in other professions. As democracy progressed, leadership qualities emanated from the ranks of mediapersons, lawyers, educationists, economists, social activists and businessmen. Today, they form the bulk of icons sought to be emulated by the youth. Hardly any civil servant is included in the list of such icons.

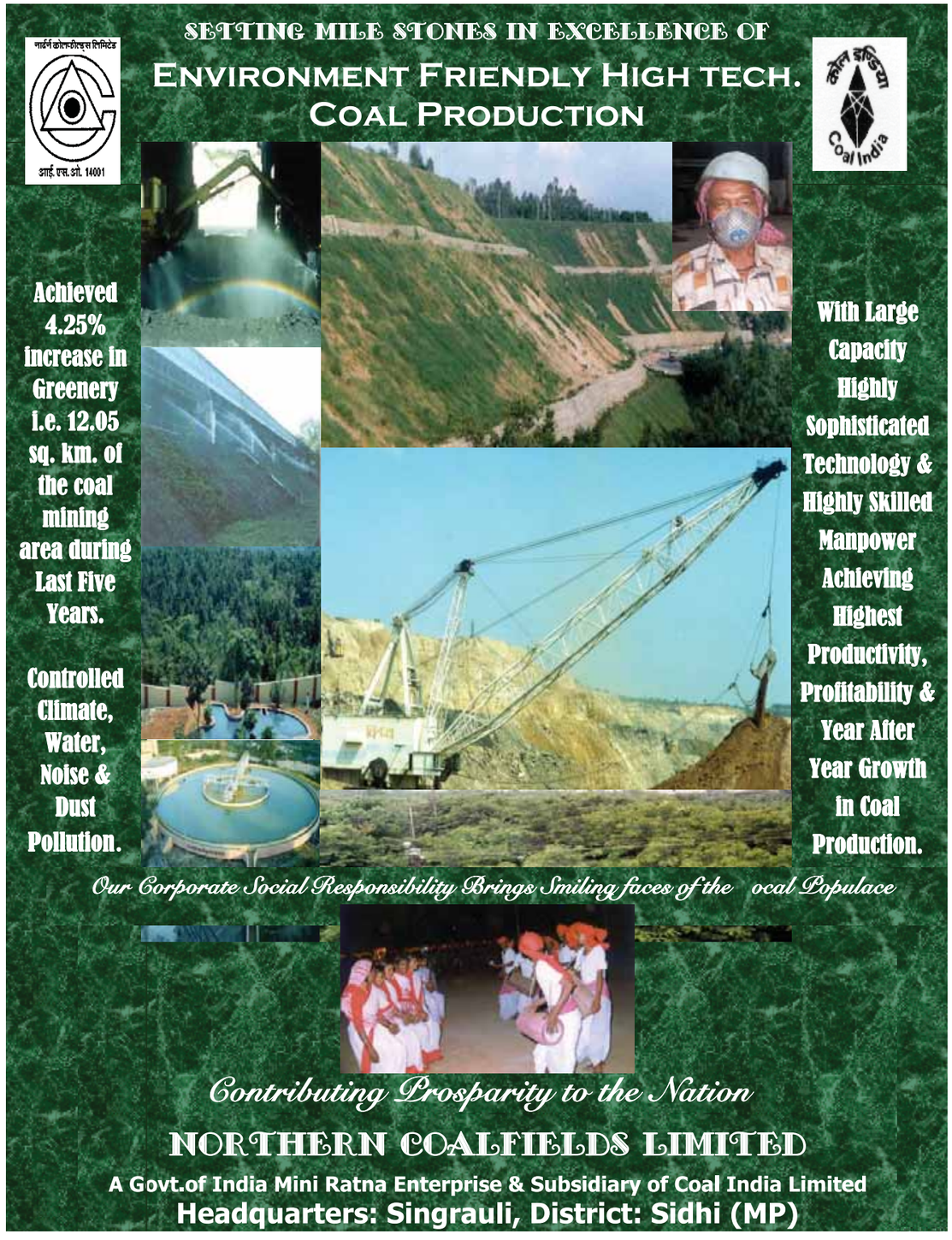
This is a matter of concern, and a lesson, for current civil servants. g

The writer was Cabinet Secretary, Governor of Jharkhand and Chairman, IC Centre for Governance

BK Nehru's PEARLS OF WISDOM

BK NEHRU, in his memoirs *Nice Guys Finish Second*, gives an early example of the origin of distrust. Commenting on the LIC-Mundhra affair, in which the then Finance Minister tried to shift the blame to the officers of his ministry, he says,

" ..But the most disastrous result of the whole episode was the effect it had on the entire civil service of the country. We had been used to the convention as in British India and Britain, that there was no question of the minister denying his responsibility for the actions of the ministry even though he did not know anything about them....The natural effect on the civil servants was that they stopped taking fearless decisions as they had hitherto done but sent the case up for minister's approval in writing before taking action. When Mr Justice Vivian Bose asked me whether it was the practice for a secretary to record a note after the minister had given oral approval to a course of action, my reaction was "Not till now, but invariably after the LIC case". It is this lack of trust that they would be supported vis-à-vis the public if things go wrong...."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New CHECKERBOARDS

The tendency to look West and ignore the East has been rectified

by Romesh Bhandari

MANY factors go into the formulation of the foreign policy of a country. As a determining principle, foreign policy cannot be foreign to the country itself and the basic objective has to serve national interest and relate to the regional, international, political, economic, industrial and technological situation of the country. This is particularly so for a country like India with an ancient, uninterrupted civilization, the second-largest population in the world comprising followers of all the major world religions, generous natural and human resources that have been exploited by over two centuries of foreign rule and that has achieved independence from the greatest colonial empire the world has ever known through the moral force of non-violence. Thus, India's foreign policy is a very intricate interplay of many factors.

We emerged into independence at a time when the world also entered a new era. The Second World War had ended and the nuclear age had commenced. The Allies who fought the Nazis had become adversaries and embarked on a feverish nuclear arms race. Two opposing groups had emerged. The nuclear era, however, demanded that the peoples of the world learn to live together as otherwise they would die together. India's achieving independence triggered a domino effect that dismantled the colonial era. The creation of Israel introduced instability in a strategic area on which the world depended largely for its energy requirements.

In our neighbourhood, the partition of India on religious grounds and the Kashmir issue injected bitterness and hostility amongst the two largest neighbours. With China, the most important in the neighbourhood, we had links going back into the dark periods of history. Regardless of differences that could arise, the mutual imperative was and remains cooperation

Sonia Gandhi in China: looking East

and not confrontation.

India's foreign policy thus had to be fenced in by some basic criteria. We were too large to become a client or subservient state – hence our keeping out of the opposing groups and the non-aligned movement (NAM) of which India was the main pillar and cementing force. We spearheaded the fight against apartheid and the process of decolonization. We espoused the cause of global peace, co-existence, and disarmament. Support for the Palestinian cause arose out of our fight against injustice and past historical links with the Arabs and West Asia.

The world has changed beyond imagination and expectation in the last 60 years. While the basic parameters remain the same, with changing times and situations our national interests and priorities have also undergone changes. It has been a process of continuity with change.

Apartheid is finished and a new South Africa has emerged. India can take pride that we played a decisive role in this respect, particularly the contribution of Rajiv Gandhi in the final stages. The colonial age is now history with the only issue remaining being that of Palestine. The Cold War is long over, diminishing considerably the role of NAM. Our relations with the US and Russia continue to be based on merit and not at the expense of relations with the other.

We have so much in common with the US that we should build upon this to mutual benefit. We do have differences, arising out of the fact that we are on opposite sides of the world. They are the world's strongest economic power and we are a developing nation. We have to build upon the positives and not let the differences impact our cooperation.

We cannot forget the relations that existed with the erstwhile Soviet Union and have to develop them even further as Russia is also an Asian power and has always been supportive of our strategic concerns. It is a country of the future.

In the neighbourhood, we are hopefully erasing the tension with China that has persisted after the 1961 war. The border dispute is no longer the core issue and is on the back burner to be settled through dialogue and negotiation. Relations with Pakistan have eventually come on the right track of negotiations with a commitment that war is not a solution.

With the other neighbours, our relations are settling to a situation where each understands and respects the other even though there are still areas where we have trans-border problems. We had a tendency to look West and neglect the East – a region India has so much in common with both historically and culturally. This has been set right and the prospects for the future are bright. The same applies to Europe, which we had ignored due to our bias for the English-speaking.

Looking at the future, we must continue to give top priority to our neighbours. We should do all we can to ensure that a cold war does not start in Asia. We can be competitive but not confrontationist. General

We cannot forget the relations that existed with the erstwhile Soviet Union and have to develop them

and complete disarmament becomes an even greater imperative given that technology is developing so fast that a weapon of mass destruction may well be produced in a backyard. West Asia can become the cause of the next global war. Given our good relations with the US and Israel, and our credibility amongst the Palestinians and the Arabs, India needs to play a much more effective role in resolving the seemingly intractable problem.

"One World" is no longer a dream, but an inevitable prospect and India is a micro example of it. We can show that there can be unity in diversity globally just as we have achieved in our unique country. g

The writer is a former Foreign Secretary and was Governor of Uttar Pradesh, Tripura and Goa

by Saurin Parikh

The human factor

Reinventing Government through HRM Strategies
by Hasmukh Adhia
Icfai University Press
Rs 425

"IT doesn't matter to me if my book doesn't sell a lot of copies; all I want is that five wise men read it and try to implement what I have suggested," says Hasmukh Adhia, author of *Reinventing Government through HRM Strategies*. A man who wears many hats, Adhia is an IAS officer and currently Principal Secretary to the Gujarat government. In a distinguished 25-year career, he has held several prominent positions in the government. He holds a postgraduate degree in accountancy with a postgraduate diploma in public policy and management from IIM-B, where he was awarded a gold medal for academic excellence in 2004.

Hasmukh Adhia

In his latest *avatar* as an author, Adhia dwells on the principles of human resource management (HRM) and how they can be implemented in the government to achieve better governance. He says, "The Government delivery mechanism needs to be sharpened and the key to the same is HRM. India has a large bureaucracy and it is this bureaucracy that can accelerate or derail the country's growth. Hence, how well the Government performs is directly relative to how well its human resources are employed."

In this well researched book, the author cites different cases and surveys (some of them carried out by himself) to accentuate his observations and suggestions. He dwells upon the subjects of job satisfaction and motivation of government employees, what they want and innovations in governance carried out by the Gujarat government in the form of the acclaimed Karmayogi Maha Abhiyan. Other landmark innovations of the Gujarat government such as One Day Governance, and a study from the United States make the book an interesting as well as informative thesis on HRM in the government.

In the final chapter, Adhia explains how any government can be reinvented through human resource management. He says, "Even the top-level bureaucrats, the Class-I officers, lack awareness about the need to communicate with their staff. Most government employees have no clue as to what they are supposed to be doing and consequently don't consider their roles to be important enough in the bureaucracy. The only way to motivate these employees is by communicating with them and making them feel that they are important to the Government and its objectives." Referring to the example of Russi Modi who turned around the fortunes of TISCO, Adhia says, "Shri Russi Modi was able to make TISCO a success again only because he made every single TISCO employee feel special. He would call a meeting of all the soft-core employees and just the fact that they were being called for a meeting, made them feel important and boosted their morale. The same needs to be done in the Government."

The book is a testimony to the experiences of its author. "I didn't choose HRM as the way to reinvent the government without any reason; I chose HRM because of what I experienced over my career with the government. People are after all the running force behind a government," he says.

Adhia, who is currently doing a PhD in yoga, says, "In my book, I have put forward hardcore facts to support my suggestions. There is no speculation, only data-supported reasoning. I have put forward what I have learnt; it is now up to the readers to act on it." g

Keeping a tab on whether government is del ivering helps to convert rhetoric into reality

by Prajapati Trivedi

"Government likes to begin things—to declare grand new programmes and causes and national objectives. But good beginnings are not the measure of success. What matters in the end is completion. Performance. Results. Not just making promises, but making good on promises. In my Administration, that will be the standard from the farthest regional office of government to the highest office of the land."

THIS quote from President George Bush captures the essence of his management agenda. Few people realize that in the midst of the war on terrorism, the Bush Administration has been fighting an equally important and pervasive war on public sector inefficiency. On October 30, 2001, less than two months after 9/11, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Mitch Daniels, issued a memorandum to the heads of executive departments and agencies on the implementation of the President's Management Agenda. Whatever else you may think of his other policies, Bush has to be commended for maintaining focus on essential priorities of good governance and sustaining momentum for making the US government machinery more effective.

Check the President's scorecard!

The Management Agenda consists of five government-wide and nine agency-specific goals to improve federal management and deliver results that the US President believes matter to the American people. The government-wide initiatives include Strategic Management of Human Capital, Budget and Performance Integration, Competitive Sourcing, Expanded e-government, and Improved Financial Management. The President's Management Agenda was designed to "address the most apparent deficiencies where the opportunity to improve performance is the greatest". It focuses on remedies to problems generally agreed to be serious, and commits to implement them fully.

In addition to the five government-wide initiatives, there are nine agency-specific reforms. They include programmes like Better Research and Development Investment Criteria; Elimination of Fraud and Error in Student Aid Programmes and Deficiencies in Financial Management; Reform of Food Aid Programmes, etc. While US government agencies face a long list of critical management and performance problems, these nine reform efforts were chosen to begin the effort based on several criteria such as severity of the problem and the importance of the problem to those served; direct and demonstrable benefit to citizens; opportunity to make a dramatic and material difference in programme performance; and probability of achieving improvements in the near term.

It can be argued that there is nothing special about a government setting priorities and announcing new management initiatives. Many, if not most, governments do so during their tenure. The Indian government too is famous for announcing major steps for improving functioning of various government departments. However, the US government's emphasis on the follow-up and implementation of these initiatives sets the American approach apart from the rest.

To ensure that the rhetoric is converted into reality, an Executive Branch Management Scorecard is used to show how well a department or an agency is implementing the President's management initiatives. This scorecard is provided to the department/agency heads and the President on a regular basis. Indeed, it is available on the internet for all Americans (and the world) to see.

Figure 1 gives an example of a recent Management Scorecard. It has two columns: one showing the current status of implementing the five management initiatives against their respective standards of success (left column), and the other representing the progress in implementing the initiatives (right column).

Scores for "status" (left column) are based on the scorecard standards for success. Figure 2 gives an example of these standards for Strategic Management of Human Capital. These standards for success are developed by the President's Management Council and discussed with experts throughout the US government and academe, including the National Academy of Public Administration. An agency is rated as "Green" or "Yellow" if it meets all of the standards for success listed in the respective columns and "red" if it has any one of a number of serious flaws listed in the "Red" column.

The "progress" made by agencies in filling up the gaps and achieving an acceptable status (right-hand column) is judged against the deliverables and time lines established for the five initiatives that are agreed upon with each agency. The color coding implies the following:

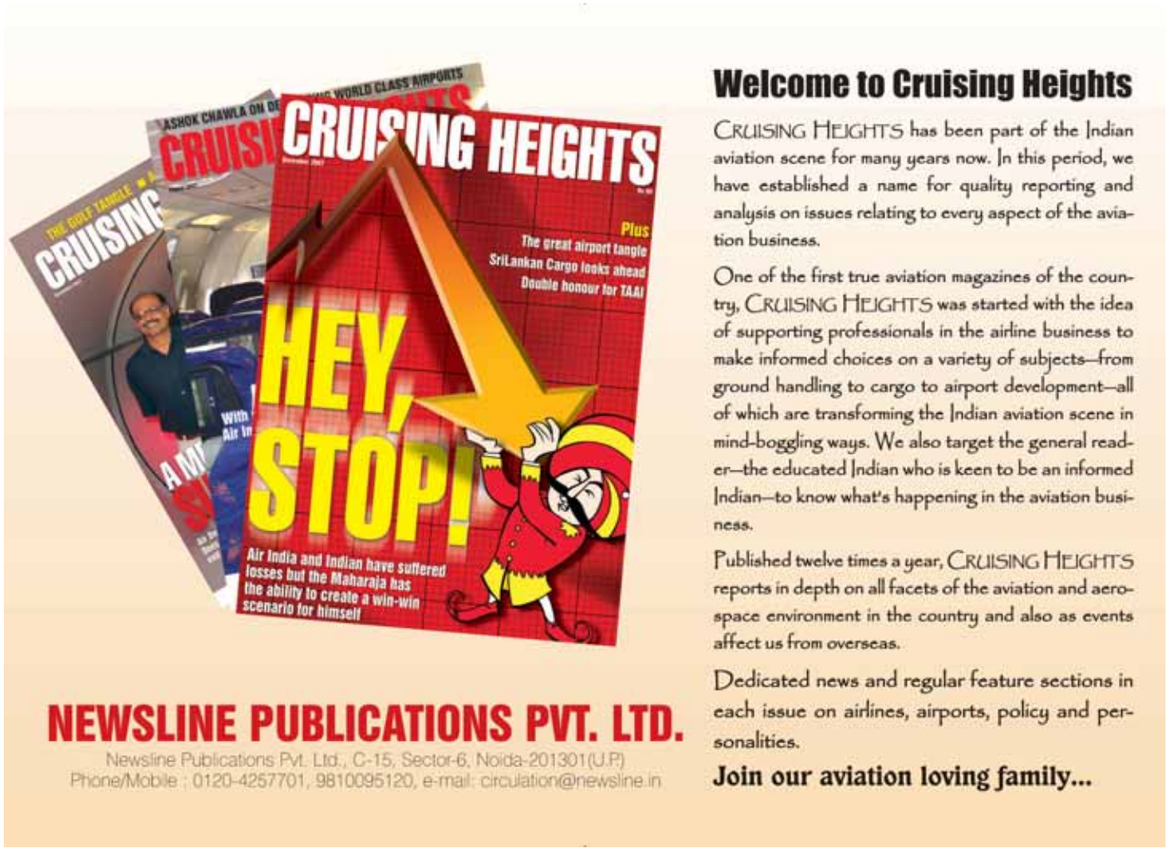
Green implies that the implementation is proceeding according to plans agreed upon with the agencies; yellow implies some slippage or other issues requiring adjustment by the agency in order to achieve the initiative objectives on a timely basis; and red indicates that the management initiative is in serious jeopardy and is unlikely to realize objectives without significant management intervention.

Strengths

Whatever the flaws, and there are some significant ones, this policy represents a major improvement over past efforts of President Clinton's National Performance Review and is an important step in the right direction. This tool (Management Scorecard) also represents a continuity of effort in reforming governments in the US.

It is now widely recognized that the efficiency of government acts as a ceiling on the efficiency of all sectors. The efficiency of the executive branch, in particular, is a key determinant of public sector efficiency and effectiveness. Normally, most governments caught in a vicious cycle of poor governance do not know where it all began. It is like a cancer and once it has spread to other parts of the body, it is too late to perform a localized surgery. In a sense, when this has happened, it is not important how it all began. From a public policy point of view, it is more important to find levers to break this vicious cycle of inefficiency and ineffectiveness in the government departments. In the US context, people elect a President every four years to fix the government and, thus, a President who is engaged in this task deserves our praise.

Second, this management tool corrects a major flaw in the system of Performance Agreements initiated by President Clinton under the aegis of National Performance Review. Introduced under the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, Performance Agreements (PAs) were a bold attempt to introduce accountability for performance in the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Air India and Indian have suffered losses but the Maharaja has the ability to create a win-win scenario for himself
Welcome to Cruising Heights
CRUISING HEIGHTS has been part of the Indian aviation scene for many years now. In this period, we have established a name for quality reporting and analysis on issues relating to every aspect of the aviation business.
One of the first true aviation magazines of the country, CRUISING HEIGHTS was started with the idea of supporting professionals in the airline business to make informed choices on a variety of subjects—from ground handling to cargo to airport development—all of which are transforming the Indian aviation scene in mind-boggling ways. We also target the general reader—the educated Indian who is keen to be an informed Indian—to know what's happening in the aviation business.
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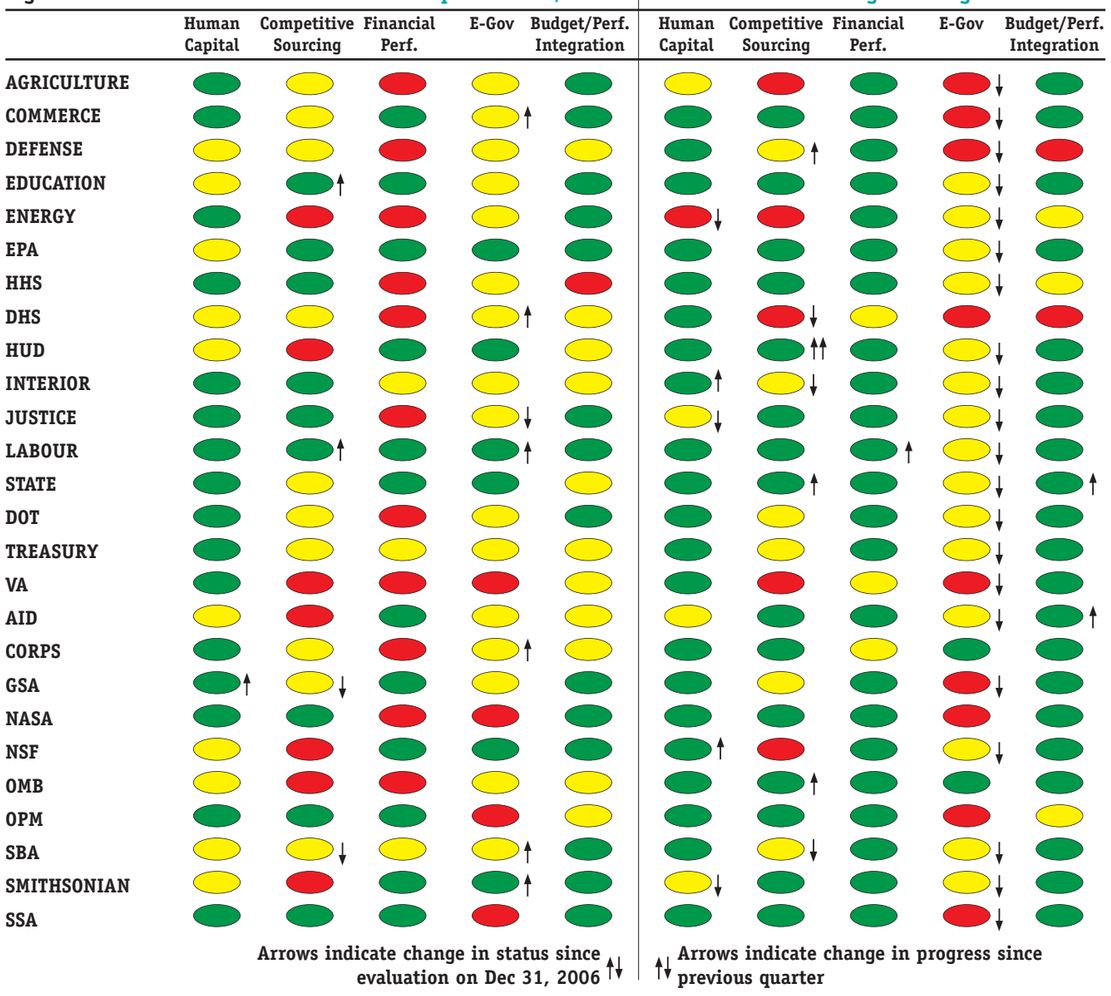
Executive Branch Management Scorecard

Figure 1



executive arm of the US government and I remain an admirer of that governance innovation. PAs gave a concrete shape to the nebulous concept of accountability for results. PAs were agreements that listed the mission, objectives, and measurable (verifiable) annual targets for each agency. The problem with them was that they had a weak evaluation system. Thus, they remained a good concept in theory without achieving their intended objective. David Osborne, author of Banishing Bureaucracy, believes that the real reason was lack of political courage for making the evaluation results public. For this reason alone, the system of Management Scorecard (MS) represents a bold political move.

Weaknesses

No management system is perfect and MS too has its share of conceptual problems. However, all these problems are small in comparison to the achievements of this system and they are all remediable. In comparision to international best practice, some areas for future improvement stand out. For example, there is an implicit assumption that all elements of the President's management agenda are equally important. What if the circumstances of an agency require that in the interest of its clients (the new word for citizens) it must focus exclusively on e-government? This may be the right thing to do for this agency at that moment, but the MS system allows no such flexibility. If the top management of this agency really sticks to its guns and does what it believes to be the "right" thing, it may end up getting a quick green in the e-government column, but have a lot of red dots in the other four areas. Thus, the system can fail to send the "correct" signal to the management of the public agency. Not only does it not allow prioritization among the individual elements of the President's management agenda, it also fails to recognize the need for prioritization among the "standards for success" mentioned in Figure 1.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN CAPITAL

Figure 2

Agency:	Agency:	Agency:
■ Implemented a comprehensive Human Capital Plan that is current and fully aligns with the agency's overall strategic plan and annual performance goals, and budgetary priorities; demonstrates that Human Capital planning efforts (including workforce, succession, accountability, survey action and other Human Capital-related plans) are strategically integrated; analyzed implementation results relative to the plan, and used them in decision making to drive continuous improvement; ■ Implemented an organizational structure that provides greater efficiencies in serving customers and stakeholders, reduces overall program costs and improves performance. The agency's workforce plan delineates how to effectively deploy, restructure, and/or delayer the workforce; and to use competitive sourcing, E-Gov solutions, as necessary; and the agency has process(es) in place to continuously review the organizational structure and update it to address future changes in business needs in a timely manner; ■ Succession strategies, including structured leadership development programs, result in adequate leadership bench strength; agency meets its targets for closing leadership competency gaps; and agency determined that bench strength and competency gap closure support organizational objectives; ■ Demonstrates that it has performance appraisal and awards systems for all SES and managers, and more than 70% of the workforce, that effectively: link to agency mission, goals, and outcomes; hold employees accountable for results appropriate for their level of responsibility; differentiate between various levels of performance (i.e., multiple performance levels with at least one summary rating above Fully Successful); and provide consequences based on performance. ■ Implemented a performance pilot, providing evidence that at the pilot site clear expectations are communicated to employees; rating and awards data demonstrate that managers effectively planned, monitored, developed and appraised employee performance; and the pilot site is ready to link pay to the performance appraisal systems. In addition, the agency significantly increased the number of employees covered under the pilot systems; and achieved a score of 80 or above on PAAT on the original and expanded performance pilots	■ Develops, documents and communicates throughout the agency comprehensive Human Capital Plan that: ■ Is current and clearly aligns with the agency's current strategic plan, annual performance goals, and budgetary priorities; ■ Fully addresses the Human Capital Assessment and Accountability Framework (HCAAF): ■ Strategically integrates and drives all human capital planning efforts, including workforce, succession, diversity, Federal Human Capital Survey/Annual Employee Survey action, accountability planning and other HC-related activities; ■ Includes general HC goals and objectives including outcome-oriented goals and objectives; ■ Incorporates metrics that: 1) Measure outcomes, 2) Have clear, obtainable targets, and 3) include timelines for implementation, and ■ Designates accountable officials; ■ Analyzed existing organizational structures from a service delivery, cost, and general workforce planning perspective, Relevant workforce solutions including redeployment and delayering are deployed as necessary; ■ Implemented succession management strategies, including structured leadership development programs, to assure continuity of leadership, sets targets for closing leadership competency gaps (including those addressing gaps in performance management competencies), implements gap closure strategies, and meets key milestones outlined in succession management plan	■ Lacks a comprehensive Human Capital Strategy and has not implemented a workforce planning system; ■ Has not analyzed its organizational structure from a service delivery, cost, and general workforce planning perspective; ■ Has not identified leadership gaps and implemented succession strategies to assure continuity of leadership; ■ Has not implemented a performance appraisal system for SES and managers that is linked to agency mission, goals and outcomes, effectively differentiate between various levels of performance, and provides consequences based on performance; ■ Has not implemented strategies to address workforce diversity; ■ Has not identified mission critical occupations and the associated strategic competencies to allow for the effective recruitment, development, and retention, of a highly qualified workforce; ■ Has not made progress toward meeting aggressive hiring time standards and does not make use of hiring flexibilities

Lessons for India

There are many good lessons that our government leaders can learn from the way their counterparts deal with management of government performance. First, they must act quickly and not set up seemingly immortal administrative reform commissions and committees that have a unique capacity to outlive the government tenures. Both Presidents Clinton and Bush set their administrative reform agenda as soon as they got into power and implemented most of it at the beginning of their tenures. This is the time when, as Margaret Thatcher observed, you have a lot of political capital to reform the government. Second, the leader of the government must drive the agenda and not be seen as waiting for ideas from outsiders. They must have some basic passion to improve performance of government and show it by action and not by repeating platitudes. Finally, unless the performance of government departments is made public (like through the Management Scorecard), it will have no impact on the behaviour of the government mandarins who rule in the name of public service. President Bush has shown that improving government performance is more to do with common sense and political will than with theory and technical skills. Finally, in these days of internet connectivity and globalization of information, most of the tools and technique for improving government performance are in the public domain. Not utilizing this information to serve the poorest and the needy is, frankly, a sign of intellectual corruption. g

The writer is Senior Economist, World Bank and visiting faculty at the John F Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

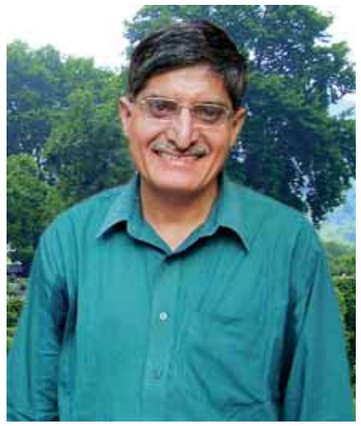
Rooting for trees

A crore of saplings planted in a day

by Tara Patkar

AS Principal Secretary, Forest, VN Garg found himself unable to come to terms with the fact that Uttar Pradesh had only 9 per cent forest cover. He vowed to plant a crore of saplings in a day. He roped in school children, teachers, social workers, intellectuals and forest department personnel to meet the challenge. And July 31, 2007 was picked as the red letter day to chase this gargantuan goal. On that day, nearly every district in the state participated in the drive and a crore of saplings was planted. It was an unprecedented exercise in the state, noted for its abysmal forest cover.

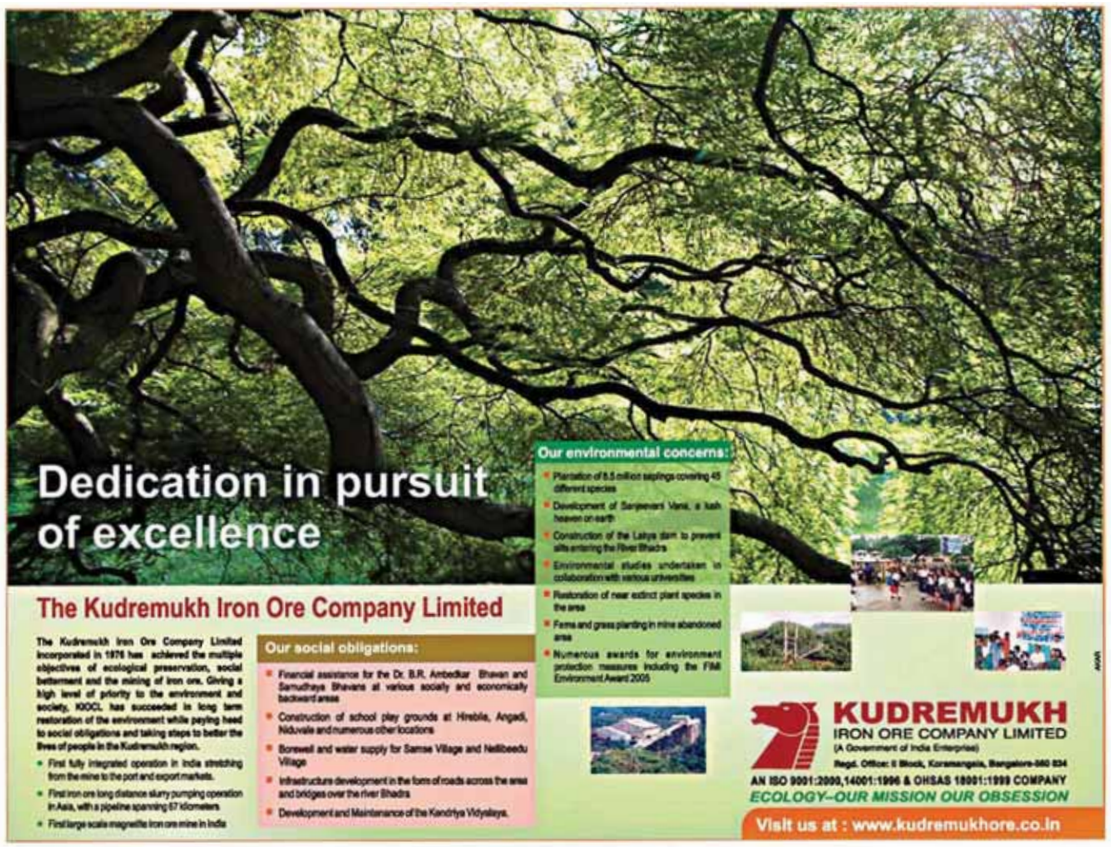
The effort did not go unnoticed. After a six-month evaluation, the state government received a certificate from the publishers of the *Guinness Book of World Records*. Garg, now Principal Secretary, Energy, is hugely satisfied.



VN Garg: Unusual drive for vegetation

"The main aim of the exercise was generation of awareness among people. It has been met. It does not matter how many people actually came out to plant trees. If we have managed to bring out even a single person from a household, the drive was successful," he says. Though it was his brainchild, he refuses to take credit for it – emphasizing that it was a team effort.

The forest department's records show that 1,02,66,736 saplings were planted at 9,320 notified sites by over 3.23 lakh people. Forest Minister Fateh Bahadur Singh, said photographs of the sites along with video clips and reports from the authenticators were sent to the Guinness authorities. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) had already certified the drive. g


Dedication in pursuit of excellence
The Kudremukh Iron Ore Company Limited
The Kudremukh Iron Ore Company Limited incorporated in 1976 has achieved the multiple objectives of ecological preservation, social betterment and the mining of iron ore. Giving a high level of priority to the environment and society, KIOCL has succeeded in long term restoration of the environment while paying heed to social obligations and taking steps to better the lives of people in the Kudremukh region.
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Development and Maintenance of the Kendriya Vidyalaya.
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Development of Sanjeevani Vana, a lush heaven on earth
Construction of the Lakya dam to prevent silts entering the River Bhadra
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Swishing the IP wand won't do

The Integrity Pact needs to be given more teeth if it is to curb sleaze in deals

by Maj Gen Mrinal Suman

A RECENT media report stated that the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) had started encouraging all government agencies to adopt an Integrity Pact (IP) to ensure transparency and eliminate corruption. Now, there appears to be a misconception that IP is a vigilance tool and a panacea to eradicate sleaze in government purchases. A close look will reveal it is nothing more than a statement of assurance to refrain from malpractices. Therefore, its significance is dependent on the integrity of the people implementing it. The current euphoria over its effectiveness is misplaced.

To increase transparency in the public sector and curb corruption, Transparency International introduced the concept of IP in the mid-1990s. After initial diffidence, a few countries have since adopted it as part of policy on government purchases. Although it is doubtful that mere incorporation of IP can reduce dishonesty in official deals, it undoubtedly helps focus on the anti-corruption campaign. It attempts to "bind all the bidders and the government together in a contract to reduce the possibility of corruption occurring both during and after the tendering". In other words, IP applies moral pressure on both government functionaries and vendors to refrain from corrupt practices. In countries where existing laws are not strong enough to be a deterrent, IP tends to supplement them.

India adopted IP for all defence procurements exceeding Rs 100 crore in 2006. A binding pre-contract IP has to be signed between the government procurement agency and the bidder. Whereas the government promises that its functionaries will not demand bribes, the bidder promises not to offer any bribe, commission or inducement to any official. Additionally, each bidder undertakes to disclose all payments made in connection with the contract, including those to agents, middlemen and others.

Violation by a bidder of its commitments or undertakings may result in denial/loss of contract; forfeiture of the security deposit and performance bond; liability for damages to the principal and the competing bidders; and even debarment of the violator for an appropriate period of time. In case it is found to the satisfaction of the government that a violation has taken place, the seller, on a specific request of the government, has to provide necessary information and facilitate inspection of the relevant financial documents.

Many feel that the efficacy of the Indian policy is suspect. India already has a number of stringent anti-corruption laws and service rules for deterrence. Pledges and undertakings mean little to the corrupt. If the fear of penal/disciplinary punishments fails to dissuade the dishonest, moral pressure can hardly be expected to succeed. Additionally, applicability of IP has been restricted to cases where the contract value is above Rs 100 crore. As most defence procurements are of lesser value, IP would apply only to a few big-ticket procurements. The policy, strangely, tends to give an impression that probity is required only when the contract value is high, and that corruption in lesser-value deals does not warrant any counter measures.

According to knowledgeable observers, the Indian policy is loaded against the vendors. A vendor has to give numerous undertakings and also agree to accept sanctions as imposed by the government. Although it is a bilateral agreement between the government and a vendor, it is the government which has arrogated the right to itself to determine that a breach has been committed by the vendor and initiate action accordingly. On the other hand, an aggrieved vendor is required to submit his grievance to the government "with full and verifiable facts". Thereafter, it is for the government to initiate further action. Thus, the government is a litigant as well as a judge. Its decision is "final and binding" and the vendor has no right to appeal. The policy is totally silent as regards dispensation of justice to the aggrieved/wronged vendor.

The policy provides for appointment of independent monitors by the government to oversee the whole process. Although their appointment is to be made in consultation with the CVC, it is unlikely to generate confidence in their credibility. As has been the experience in the past, a few well-connected retired bureaucrats would get rehabilitated in the process. They cannot be expected to be independent as their continued employment depends on their pro-government deportment. Additionally, their role is limited to informing the Acquisition Wing if they "notice, or believe to notice, a violation of the agreement". It defies logic as to how bureaucrats who are totally ignorant of the complexities and intricacies of defence procurement mechanism can be expected to spot irregularities. That is the reason most people view monitors as being of little consequence and their role as superficial and perfunctory. g

The writer is head of the Defence Technical Assessment and Advisory Service, Confederation of Indian Industry

The Scorpene submarine: submerged by graft

The Indian policy is loaded against the vendors. A vendor has to give numerous undertakings and also agree to accept sanctions as imposed by the government. Although it is a bilateral agreement, the government has arrogated the right to itself to determine a breach has been committed by the vendor and initiate action

A way out of the MESS

The Integrity Pact in its present dispensation means little. It can neither ensure probity in defence procurements nor restore people's faith in the system. Many consider it a charade rather than a serious attempt to promote probity. As it falls short on all counts, people continue to be sceptical about the government's earnestness.

First of all, probity and uprightness have to be ensured in all capital procurements irrespective of their value. The Rs 100-crore threshold must be removed. Second, the pact needs to be made more equitable and stringent. A credible grievance redressal mechanism should be instituted to ensure speedy dispensation of justice to all vendors. Third, and most important, a Probity Oversight Commission (POC) should be established to perform the functions of an ombudsman.

As the entire success of this mechanism depends on the credibility enjoyed by the Commission, it should be selected by a committee consisting of the Defence Minister, Leader of the Opposition and a sitting judge of the Supreme Court. All politically aligned personnel must be scrupulously kept away.

The POC should consist of a Chairman and three members — Technical, Commercial and Legal. The Chairman should be a retired judge of the Supreme Court. Member, Technical should be a retired service officer with experience in defence procurements. Member, Commercial should be an economist of repute from academia or the private sector and Member, Legal should be a specialist in contract management and international trade. It will be prudent not to have retired bureaucrats, as their erstwhile long association with the government may compromise their independence in the eyes of the people. All members of the Commission should have a fixed tenure of five years.

The POC should be assigned three tasks — monitor all procurement activities from evolution of parameters to post-contract implementation, render pre-activity advice to the government and perform adjudicatory functions. Both the government and the vendor should be able to approach the POC as regards alleged breaches of IP. The POC should investigate the matter and recommend suitable action — disciplinary proceedings against delinquent official(s) or imposition of sanctions on defaulting vendor(s). The POC may even recommend abrogation of a procurement proposal if it suffers from major infirmities. The POC should submit its reports to the Parliamentary Committee on Defence through the Defence Minister.

The Commission should provide a platform to vendors to seek redressal of their grievances while granting opportunity to the officials to explain the rationale of their decisions. This will promote transparency, resolve differences and facilitate reconciliation.

Close and continuous monitoring of the whole procurement process will help take timely corrective action and thus eliminate delays caused by rescinding flawed procurement cases.

Most important, the environment needs to be convinced that the government is sincere in its efforts to make the procurement regime transparent, principled and above board. Immense damage has already been caused to the national psyche with the media highlighting grave irregularities in defence procurements.

The constitution of an independent POC will bestow much-needed credibility on the government's assertions that it is striving for a corruption-free defence procurement regime.

bikram sarkar

In the line of DUTY

An inspiring narration of unflinching adherence to principles in the face of a power-mad Minister

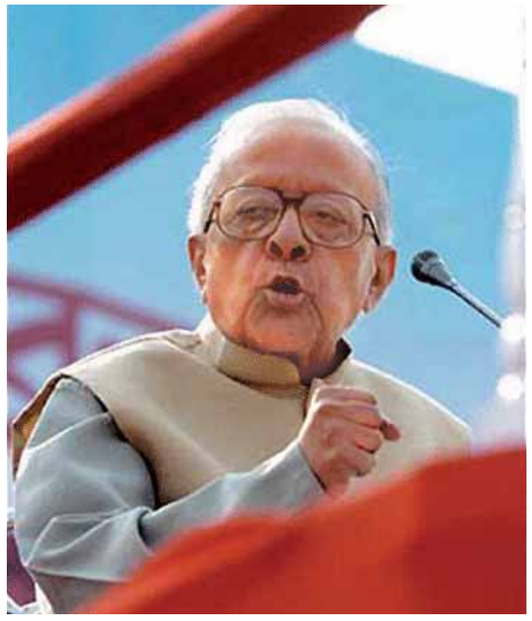
MY first contact with an IAS officer took place when I was in Class X, in 1953. The officer was SR Das, 1949 batch, who was then Sub-Divisional Officer of Lalbagh Sub-Division in my home district, Murshidabad, West Bengal. Impressed by him, and encouraged by my father, I later appeared for the Civil Services Examination. On the first attempt, in 1962, I was selected for IPS. I appeared again the next year and got into the IAS. SK Dutta, ICS, was Director, National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie. In his introductory speech, Dutta reminded the IAS probationers that we had joined the civil services of our own volition and added, "Having joined the IAS you have decided to remain poor, and having decided to remain poor don't think that you can be rich."

The three-and-a-half decades of my incumbency in the IAS were very eventful politically and economically. The relations between Ministers – both in the Central government and in the state governments – and civil servants were marked by a sense of mutual respect. Sadly, that slowly gave way to personal allegiance, favouritism, nepotism and corruption in high places. In this uneven and unscrupulous "competition", the main mantra is "act with tact" where tact is nowhere defined; it is left to individual perception. Another mantra is "Nothing succeeds like success". So-called success is to be achieved at any cost. Integrity, morality, conscience have no place.

When I started my career, civil servants with such an outlook were an aberration and society treated them with the contempt they deserved. After over three decades in service, a confrontation I would have liked to avoid was thrust upon me by a Minister. I was appointed Chairman of the Calcutta Port Trust under the Ministry of Surface Transport, Government of India in September 1993. I painfully realized that the Minister's priorities and expectations were different from what they ideally should have been. For me, the most important objective was to improve the operation of the port, develop port facilities, increase revenue earning, improve port management and efficiency. While I concentrated on these aspects, the Minister tried to create hurdles by extraconstitutional methods for considerations other than the port's development.

In the absence of a clear-cut statutory provision demarcating the duties and responsibilities of civil servants vis-à-vis Ministers, as in most West European countries, there is confusion leading to crisis of confidence.

After I assumed the post of Chairman, CPT, on 22 December 1993 the Minister of State for Surface Transport asked me to meet him in Delhi for discussion regarding a CPT tender for



Jyoti Basu: probity versus politics

hiring a despatch vessel. The Minister wanted me to select AKAM shipping company's vessel (represented by one Captain Kamboj, who the Minister said was close to him). The Tender Committee, on examination of the "technical bid" of AKAM, rejected it as the vessel did not conform to the technical specification/requirement. When I conveyed this to the Minister, he was annoyed. I expressed my inability to accept the AKAM offer as the Tender Committee selected another company's vessel after the tender. Subsequently, in early 1994, CPT issued a tender notice asking for a pilot vessel on hire for transporting CPT pilots to the sandhead in the Bay of Bengal. AKAM participated in the tender but was again rejected as it failed to fulfill the conditions.

On May 13, 1994 the Minister phoned me from Delhi at the Airport Hotel, Calcutta where the Secretary of the Ministry was holding a meeting with me and other port officers. He asked why AKAM was rejected again. I replied that its vessel would not serve the purpose. To this, he said angrily, "What are you doing? You can't oblige your Minister. This time I am not going to listen to anything. See that AKAM's ship is selected." The file was then referred to the Ministry for advice and direction. (The file was never returned to CPT.)

While the port was recording an upswing in all respects (during my initial 10-month tenure, the revenue surplus of CPT registered a jump from Rs 44 crore to Rs 88 crore), I was told by the Minister to go on leave on July 20, 1994. The decision was conveyed by the Secretary of the Ministry in a "Strictly Confidential" letter sent on the office fax. I then applied for earned leave for 10 days. Then I sent a number of letters and reminders to the Secretary and tried to contact him over the phone many times in the course of over 15 days, but he did not respond.

Chief Minister Jyoti Basu wrote to the Minister on July 26, 1994: "I am informed (on my return from abroad) Dr BK Sarkar, a very senior IAS officer of the State Cadre now on deputation to the Government of India and posted as Chairman, Calcutta Port Trust, has been peremptorily asked to proceed on leave and that Dr Sarkar in fact has proceeded on leave accordingly. It may kindly be recalled that, keeping in view the importance of the Calcutta Port, we had suggested the appointment of Dr Sarkar as Chairman of CPT and the Government of India

'The Minister said angrily, "What are you doing? You can't oblige your Minister. I am not going to listen to anything" '

had appointed him as such just about ten months ago. During this period, according to my information, the Port has done well and there had been a significant improvement in the performance of the Ports both at Haldia and Calcutta. I have had occasions to discuss with Sarkar major problems relating to the two Ports, especially Haldia Port, and I have also written to you since regarding the need for urgent decisions on dredging, etc. to safeguard the Haldia Port. Under these circumstances, the sudden decision to ask Sarkar to proceed on leave has indeed come to me as a surprise. While the facts or circumstances leading to the present decision are not known to me but still in my view, the performance of the Port in the recent past and our own interest in the healthy growth of the Port, warrant reconsideration of the matter. I shall be grateful if you would kindly reconsider the matter and resolve the current stalemate in the management of the CPT." (Chief Minister's DO No 126-CM.)

The Minister did not respond. Basu sent a reminder on August 8, 1994 (DO No 141-CM): "I had written to you vide my DO No 126-CM dated 26.7.94 on the unusual instance of Shri BK Sarkar, IAS, Chairman, CPT being asked to proceed on leave. I have not been favoured with a reply since. In the meantime, I understand that your Ministry has issued fresh instructions virtually replacing Shri Sarkar. Shri Sarkar is a very senior officer belonging to the State Cadre of the IAS and you were good enough to appoint him after consultation with us as Chairman, CPT. My point of writing to you was to see that no injustice is done and the Port management does not suffer. We do not know what are the charges against this officer and possibly even the officer himself does not know as yet. I would, in the circumstances, request you again to reconsider the matter. I shall also be grateful for an early response."

There was still no response. I was told that, feeling hurt and embarrassed at the Minister's lack of courtesy in not replying, Basu spoke to Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao. As a last resort, I approached the Calcutta High Court on August 25, 1994 with a writ petition against the Ministry of Surface Transport and others. I obtained an order setting aside the order of the Ministry asking me to be on leave and was allowed by the High Court to discharge my functions as Chairman, Calcutta Port Trust, according to law without any hindrance to which the Ministry acquiesced. The Minister in question was transferred in September 1995 in a Cabinet reshuffle. I served under two Ministers till I retired in April 1997.

The Prime Minister, if he wants the bureaucracy to function honestly without fear or favour for the development of the country, should spare some thought on the issue of establishing an ideal relationship between ministers and civil servants.

On the day of my superannuation on April 30, 1997, the then Minister for Surface Transport, TG Venkatraman, wrote me a letter praising the financial and physical performance of the Port during my three-and-a-half years of stay. It was not a small reward. All ministers are not the same. I had got a raw deal at the hands of a Minister gone insane with power.

I got a further chance to serve the people as a member of the 12th and 13th Lok Sabhas. g

birthdays

IAS officers' birthdays | April 16–May 15, '08

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For the complete list, see www.indianbuzz.com

TRACKING

For a complete list of appointments & retirements, see www.indianbuzz.com

SN DASH
The 1973-batch IAS officer of the Kerala cadre has become Secretary, Ministry of Heavy Industries & Public Enterprises.

NAND KISHORE
The 1984-batch IPS officer of the Rajasthan cadre is now IG, BSF, Siliguri.

M JEYACHANDREN
The 1983-batch IRAS officer has been appointed Additional Director General of the Commonwealth Games Secretariat.

S CHAUDHRY
The 1977-batch IAS officer of the Madhya Pradesh cadre is now Additional Secretary and Financial Advisor, Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

PK PATNAIK
The 1980-batch IAS officer of the Bihar cadre is the new Joint Secretary in the Department of Development of North-Eastern Region.

AJAI CHOUDHARY
The 1975-batch IFS officer has been appointed Dean of the Foreign Service Institute.

A RAGHOTHAM RAO
The 1970-batch IAS officer of the Andhra Pradesh cadre has been appointed Chief Secretary of the state.

FIROZA MEHROTRA
The 1974-batch IAS officer of the Haryana cadre is now Principal Secretary, Home, Jails, Criminal Investigation and Administration of Justice Department, to the Haryana government.

SHEKHAR AGRAWAL
The 1977-batch IAS officer of the Uttar Pradesh cadre has joined the Ministry of Defence as Additional Secretary.

TK PANDEY
The 1987-batch IAS officer of the Orissa cadre has been posted as Health Secretary in the state.

RATAKONDA DAYAKAR
The 1976-batch Indian Foreign Service officer has become India's Ambassador to Sweden.

RAJU SHARMA
The 1982-batch IAS officer of the Uttar Pradesh cadre has joined the University Grants Commission as Secretary.

VENKATARAMANI BHASKAR
The 1981-batch IAS officer of the Andhra Pradesh cadre is now Joint Secretary in the 13th Finance Commission.

DEEPA GOPALAN WADHWA
The 1979-batch IFS officer has been appointed India's next Ambassador to Qatar.

BALWINDER SINGH BHULLAR
The 1986-batch IAS officer of the Uttar Pradesh cadre is now Joint Secretary in the 13th Finance Commission.

CHARANJIT SINGH
The 1990-batch IFS officer of the Madhya Pradesh cadre has become Deputy Advisor in the Ministry of Rural Development.

RAMANAND TIWARI
The 1972-batch IAS officer of the Maharashtra cadre has been appointed Information Commissioner in the state.

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e-mail : admn@ime.in, ime@vsnl.net
www.imesahibabad.ac.in

Moving On: ias and ips officers retiring in April 2008

ASSAM-MEGHALAYA
Sasadhar Nath (1988)
KN Buragohain (1991)

ANDHRA PRADESH
A Ragotham Rao (1970)

GUJARAT
Cheeramattam J Jose (1974)

HARYANA
Pious Pandarwani (1972)

TAMIL NADU
TR Ramasamy (1979)

UTTAR PRADESH
Mohan Swaroop (1990)

UNION TERRITORIES
Neeru Nanda (1971)

ips

ANDHRA PRADESH
AV Narayana (1987)

MANIPUR-TRIPURA
TK Sanyal (1983)
Md Abdur Raheman (1985)

AGMUT
AK Sinha (1979)

HARYANA
Chattar Singh Paarcha (1977)

KARNATAKA
Vijay Sasnur (1970)

RAJASTHAN
Chunni Lal (1990)

UTTAR PRADESH
Jagjit S Ghungesh (1972)
Teji Ram (1990)

WEST BENGAL
Sadhan Chandra Mondal (1984)

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Garland a cow, win an election

AVINASH Mishra, a 1979-batch Indian Forest Service officer of the AGMUT cadre and Principal Resident Commissioner of Delhi's Arunachal Pradesh Bhawan, is known more for his political skills, interest in astrology and for recommending occult practices than for looking after forests. In the last

Assembly polls, scores of aspiring MLAs approached him to get astrological help for the elections.

An obscure tribal politician, having secured a ticket, filed his nomination papers and then found, as electioneering gathered momentum, that he was lagging behind his rivals badly. He met Mishra and requested him to invoke divine intervention. Mishra, seated in a meditative posture, pondered for a moment and then told him to garland a cow the next day.

So, the next morning, the candidate went out in search of a cow. He did spot one and stood face to face with her in utmost reverence, garland in hand. But, the next moment, as he garlanded her, the cow lowered her head and caught him in the stomach with her horns. The poor man was catapulted into the air and ended up grievously injured. He spent the remainder of the campaigning period in hospital. The news spread like wild fire among the electorate and crowds thronged the hospital to see him. And, the "sympathy wave" so generated won him the election. He is now utterly beholden to Mishra.

Prostration is the best policy

NOT to be outdone is another officer with similarly strange ways, this time in the Department of Agriculture and Horticulture, Government of Karnataka. Arkalgud Ramaswamy, a 1974-batch IAS officer and Principal Secretary, is by all accounts a competent and honest officer. Yet, he feels compelled to physically prostrate himself before politicians to curry favour with them. Eyewitnesses have

seen him prostrating before a former Prime Minister.

Such prostration (euphemistically referred to as "public relations" by his staff) is apparently part of his daily routine. He comes to office at 12.30 pm and then leaves after barely an hour. He reappears at 3.30 pm and works till 9 pm. The reason for his absence from office is readily revealed by his staff to visitors. "Sir is doing public relations in and around the Assembly," they say, quite tongue-in-cheek.

Ramaswamy is eyeing the coveted post of Chief Secretary, according to sources. He plans to become Development Commissioner first, as the post is equivalent to Additional Chief Secretary, and then move to the top slot. After President's Rule was imposed in the state and the Assembly kept under suspended animation in November last year, Ramaswamy was confronted with a problem: how to gain access to the Governor, Rameshwar Thakur, and prostrate before him.

Babu proposes, *sarkar* disposes

FOR far too long, the government was all talk and little action when it came to rain water harvesting. Lately, though, due to the problem of the receding level of ground water and also its contamination, both the government and non-government sectors have woken up to the need to make optimum use of rain water.

So the Central government decided to despatch a team of Secretaries – one each from four states facing acute shortage of potable water – to the island nation of Maldives to study the rain water harvesting technology for application back home. The Indian Ocean tsunami of December 2004 played havoc with the ground-water system of the Maldives. But the country faced the challenge by going in for rain water harvesting in a big way. Rain water is now the sole source of potable water in the islands.

However, the Secretaries were reluctant to go to the Maldives. Instead, they wanted to go to a European country to observe rain water harvesting there. The government did not budge and ultimately the team

ILLUSTRATIONS: ARUNA

reluctantly departed for the Maldives.

There, experts from the local government escorted them to the sites of community and rain water harvesting, showed the systems consisting of catchment surface, conveyance system and water storage tanks, and explained the functioning of the technology. After one such visit to a site was over, a junior officer among the Maldivians remarked hesitantly, "Sir, we have been importing the entire technology and systems for rain water harvesting from India. I am surprised that you have come to study it here."

The babus were left feeling at once vindicated for their initial refusal to go to the Maldives and wistful at the thought of how much more enriching their trip to a European country would have been, had it materialised.

Bu then, no one listens to a babu anymore. g

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